

Appln. No. 10/005,576  
Amdt. dated November 25, 2003  
Reply to Office Action of June 11, 2003

IN THE SPECIFICATION:

Page 7, line 9, delete "4" and insert ~~7~~5--.

swivel about a horizontal axis 12. Guide arms 13 on the lifter frame 4 can pivot about the axes 14.

GA Movement of the lifter frame 4 can be computer controlled so that it can be moved spatially relative to the stack of sheets 3 in the directions of the x, y, z coordinates seen in Figure 1. On its lower side facing the stack 3, the lifter frame 4 mounts a plurality of conventional suction holders 5, which are connected to a vacuum or suction source 100 by a pneumatic line 102. As is conventional, the suction holders [4] 5 have a suction holder base 16 and a rubber suction holder sleeve 17 inside it that in turn provides an annular support surface 18 facing the stack 3. The center to center distances between the suction holders 5 are chosen, as are the dimensions of the lifter frame 4, depending on the size of the sheet metal workpiece 2 in the stack 3 to be processed.

The stack 3 of sheet metal 2 rests on a workpiece support or pallet 19. The individual sheets 2 in the stack 3 are supported laterally by means of positioning stops 20 and thereby aligned horizontally.

In Figures 1 and 5, the separator frame 6 is located along one longitudinal side of the lifter frame 4 and on the side facing the sheet 2. As can be seen from Figure 2, the separator frame 6 has a field of suction holders 7 on its lower surface.

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